

The VRA gave dignity, pride and hope to many who have been historically shut out of the democratic process and oppressed by the Jim Crow legacy.

I can remember my dad, a U.S. citizen, born here in the United States, when he first cast his first vote and told us the importance of voting. It was during that period of time that we knew the importance of voting and that every person, regardless of the limited English that they had, and my dad spoke very little English, but voted.

I encourage all of us to vote for the Voting Rights Act on a bipartisan basis, and both Republicans and Democrats are here to support a strong Voting Rights Act that extends the protection for the future generations.

RENEW THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. PRICE of North Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the Voting Rights Act reauthorization appropriately carries the names of civil rights pioneers Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King.

Along with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act was the major legislative expression of that great movement that inspired and challenged so many of us, whites and blacks alike, and that brought the liberty and justice that our Nation professes closer to realization.

Now, many Republicans say the Voting Rights Act is too burdensome or that pre-clearance is no longer needed. But listen to the testimony of North Carolina election officials.

"I would hate to operate without it," says one.

"Pre-clearance requirements are routine, and do not occupy exorbitant amounts of time, energy or resources," adds another.

"The history of X County causes our operations to be scrutinized and rightfully so," says a third official.

And a fourth adds, "The Voting Rights Act allows us an opportunity to assure the public that minority rights are being protected and that someone is independently validating those decisions."

Mr. Speaker, the Voting Rights Act works, and we must pass it at full strength.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. LEWIS of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, the right to vote is precious, almost sacred. During the 1960s, working to get a Voting Rights Act, many of us were arrested, jailed and beaten. I was arrested and jailed more than 40 times during the sixties. We stood in

unmovable lines on the courthouse steps in Selma, Alabama. We were beaten with nightsticks, bull whips and trampled by horses trying to register to vote or to get others to register to vote.

But many of my friends, many of my colleagues died. I will never forget Andy Goodman, James Chaney and Mickey Schwerner, who were beaten, shot and killed in Philadelphia, Mississippi. Jimmie Lee Jackson was killed in Alabama. Viola Liuzzo was killed on Highway 80 between Selma and Montgomery.

Because of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, we don't have to risk our lives anymore. We don't have to pass a so-called literacy test. On one occasion a man in Alabama was asked to count the number of bubbles in a bar of soap. On another occasion a man was asked to count the number of jelly beans in a jar. On one occasion there was a man in Tuskegee, Alabama who had a Ph.D. degree and he was told that he could not read or write well enough. He failed the so-called literacy test.

The Voting Rights Act was good in 1965. It is still good today.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION

(Mr. CLAY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support the reauthorization of one of the most critical pieces of legislation that this House has ever produced, the Voting Rights Act.

Today we have heard firsthand accounts of how this act changed America, and recent research confirms that the Voting Rights Act is as essential today as it was in 1965.

The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law concluded that there is still a shocking continuing reality of racial discrimination in voting that is pervasive, and these problems are nationwide.

Their three key findings were especially disturbing. First, records from the U.S. Department of Justice confirm that the actual number of documented complaints to Federal officials have increased between 1982 and 2004.

Second, polling places and voting hours in minority neighborhoods were routinely changed shortly before elections.

And finally, election officials were found to have illegally purged voters from registration lists and to have refused to translate election materials.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that people in power stop playing with that basic essential right to vote in this country.

JUST DO IT

(Mr. RUSH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the spirit of "Just Do It." Congress must

reauthorize the Voting Rights Act this week. No more delays, no more excuses. Just do it. Do it now. I say this with no degree of exaggeration. The Voting Rights Act is the essence of democracy.

Mr. Speaker, many of us, including myself, would not be here on the floor of the House of Representatives if it were not for the original Voting Rights Act of 1965. It is, quite simply, one of the most important laws in the history of our Nation. Accordingly, previous Congresses have consistently reauthorized and renewed the Voting Rights Act in a deliberative, bipartisan manner. We must do the same. Don't empathize. Just reauthorize. Just do it.

Mr. Speaker, as much progress as we made since the 1960s, we still must be vigilant. We still must strive for universal enfranchisement. For all of our successes, too many Americans face barriers to the basic right to vote.

Mr. Speaker, don't apologize. Just reauthorize. Just do it. No more delay. Let's get this work done and get it done today.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION

(Mr. BISHOP of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Voting Rights Act and the legislation before us this week which extends the Voting Rights Act for 25 years. It has been reauthorized and upheld for more than four decades. But several key provisions are set to expire next year if not reauthorized by Congress.

The Voting Rights Act is one of the most important civil rights initiatives ever enacted, protecting minority voters from discrimination and ensuring for all Americans the right to vote in a fair and equal voting process. We must protect this right. It is sacred. It stops practices such as those that allowed every African American to be expelled from the Georgia legislature between 1866 and 1900. It stops poll taxes, racial gerrymanders that dilute minority voting power. It stops moving polling places without notice. It stops hanging chads. It is the reason, after 100 years, that I was finally able to follow Jefferson Long as the first African American to represent my area of Georgia in Congress. It has empowered descendants of slaves like me to participate fully in America's political process. We should not, we must not, we cannot go back. We must renew the Voting Rights Act today.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. JOHN LEWIS, you bring tears to my eyes.